

7a

Sela Sutta

The Discourse to Sela | **M 92 = Sn 3.7**; includes **Tha 818-841, Sela Thera, gāthā**
The story of the matted-hair ascetic Keṇiya and the brahmin Sela
Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2014

1 Versions and summary of the Sela Sutta

1.1 PALI VERSIONS

1.1.1 Lateness. The **Sela Sutta** (M 92 = Sn 3.7), the “discourse to Sela,” describes the conversion of the brahmin Sela and his brahmin students.¹ It is a late work, preserved in the Sutta Nipāta,² centering around the concept of the great man (*mahā, purisa*) and is an account of the brahmin Sela who visits the Buddha to ascertain if he has the 32 marks.

1.1.2 Prose section. The Sela Sutta recurs in the **Majjhima Nikāya** (M 92), and its verses are found in the **Thera, gāthā** (Tha 818-841), which, notes K R Norman, “suggests that...the prose is not an original part of the sutta.”³ According to the Sutta Nipāta Commentary, the prose section was added by the council elders (*saṅgīti, kāra*) (SnA 456,11). [1.1.3.2]

The myth of the great man (*mahā, purisa*) was then woven around these verses, post-Buddha, by the council elders or sutta reciters.⁴

1.1.3 Verses

1.1.3.1 The Sutta verses themselves (which occur in all three texts)⁵ form a narrative passage, with the following identical passages from the Sutta Nipāta and the Thera, gāthā:

Sn 548-567 = Tha 818-837

Sn 568-569

Sn 570-574 = Tha 838-841

The Commentaries also ascribe various verses to certain individuals or groups, thus:

Sn 548-553	Tha 818-823	Sela;
Sn 554	Tha 824, 827-831, 837	the Buddha ⁶
Sn 555-556	Tha 825-826	Sela
Sn 557-561	Tha 827-831	the Buddha
Sn 562-564	Tha 832-834	Sela
Sn 565	Tha 835	the brahmin youths (Sela’s followers) ⁷
Sn 566-567	Tha 836-837	the Buddha
Sn 568-569	(none)	the Buddha (the thanksgiving verses)
Sn 570-573	Tha 838-841	the monks Sela and the young brahmins

These verses are in *śloka* (Skt “stanza”; P *siloka*) metre (like the Dhammapada verses), that is, they are quatrains (*pāda*, comprising “4 feet” or lines) with 8 syllables per line, which is technically known as *anuṣṭubh* (Skt; P *anuṭṭhubhā*) [4.2.1].

1.1.3.2 The stanzas with 4 lines of 8 syllables each are also known as “verses,” *gāthā* (ts), which is also the name for one of the 9 genres or “limbs” (*aṅga*) of the Buddha’s teaching.⁸ This limb—the *gāthās*

¹ For a study of conversion stories in Sn in general, see Bailey 1991.

² **Sutta Nipāta** (Sn) is a mixed anthology of some of the most ancient texts (esp those of the last two chapters, Aṭṭhaka Vagga (ch 4 = Sn 766-975) and Pārāyaṇa Vagga (ch 5 = Sn 976-1149), and some very late works (such as the Ratana Sutta, Sn 222-238). See Norman, “Pali Literature,” in *A History of Indian Literature* vol 7.2, Wiesbaden, 1983:67.

³ Sn 3.7/p102-112 and EĀ 49.6 @ T2.798a-800b. For a study of **Sela S** (Sn 3.7), see Perera 1950; for a study and partial tr of EĀ 49.6, see Analayo 2010c. While the venue in the Pali versions is Āpaṇa, a town in Aṅguttarāpa, EĀ 49.6 locates it in the squirrels’ feeding ground in the Veḷu, vana, outside Rājagaha.

⁴ On the marks of the great man (*mahā, purisa, lakkhaṇa*), see **Lakkhaṇa S** (D 30), SD 36.9.

⁵ M 92 = Sn 3.7, + Tha 818-841 (verses only).

⁶ SnA 2:453,26, 454,32, 455,23; ThaA 3:47, 48, 50.

⁷ SnA 455,18; ThaA 3:50.

—in other words, comprises only of verses, such as the verses of the Dhammapada, the Sutta Nipāta, the Thera,gāthā, and the Therī,gāthā.

1.1.3.3. A related genre is that of the *geyya* (“that which should be sung”), “verse narratives,” that is, texts comprising verses interspersed with prose. Such verses or prose often stand by themselves, and do not necessarily reiterate one another. In fact, the Sela Sutta is an example of a Geyya genre.

More broadly, scholars have also used the term *ākhyāna* (ts, “telling”; also *akkhāna*) to refer to such works of mixed prose and verse. Traditionally, however, *akkhāna* refers a Vedic genre, comprising recitations of stories and legends.⁹

The verses of the Sela Sutta which also found in the Thera,gāthā are, of course, of the Gatha genre.

1.1.3.4 The older strata of Pali texts in verse, such as those in the Khuddaka Nikāya,¹⁰ are an archaic form of Pali in contrast to the Pali prose. Scholars sometimes use the term Gāthā Pāli or Gāthā dialect to describe this archaic poetic or metrical language. In Sanskrit Buddhist texts, this form developed into the more ornate *kāvya* (Skt “poetry”), especially in the works of such poets as Aśvaghōṣa, Bhartṛhari, and Śāntideva.¹¹

1.1.3.5 Although there are allusions to the great man [1.1.1] in these verses [Sn 548-553], they are all spoken by the brahmin Sela. The Buddha only acknowledges that he is, in a manner of speaking, “Dharma-rajah” who turns the Dharma-wheel [Sn 554]. Here, the Buddha does not appear to endorse the great man concept at all. The most developed conception of the great man and his marks are found especially in **the Cakka,vatti Siha,nāda Sutta** (D 26)¹² and **the Lakkhaṇa Sutta** (D 30).¹³

1.2 SUMMARY & HIGHLIGHTS

1.2.1 Keniya meets the Buddha

1.2.1.1 [§1] The Buddha arrives in Āpaṇa, a market-town of Aṅguttarāpa. [§2] The matted-hair ascetic Keniya, hearing of the Buddha’s fame, [§3] meets and invites him and the sangha, despite its large number, for the meal on the next day. [§4] The Buddha consents.

1.2.1.2 While the Ekottarika Āgama version and the Mūla,sarvāstivāda Vinaya simply report that the Buddha accepts the invitation, in the Sela Sutta and the Dharma,guptaka Vinaya, the Buddha twice tells Keniya that the community of monks is rather large, numbering 1250,¹⁴ clearly to ascertain with Keniya that he is capable of such a meal-offering.¹⁵

1.2.2 The brahmin Sela

1.2.2.1 [§5] The brahmin Sela, to whom Keniya is deeply devoted [§6], visits Keniya [§7]. [§8] Upon inquiring, he hears the sound “Buddha” [§9], and is simply enthralled by it, telling Keniya of the twin destiny of such a great man [§10].

1.2.2.2 Both the Pali and the Chinese versions similarly report that the brahmin Sela chances upon the preparations for the meal-offering at Keniya’s residence. When Keniya tells Sela that the preparations

⁸ On “the 9 limbs of the Teacher’s teaching” (*nav’aṅga satthu,sāsana*), see see **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 43), SD 30.2 (2.1), & SD 26.11 (3.2.1).

⁹ D 1:6,12 = Nm 366,23 (NmA 1:391,31, *bhārata,rāmāyan’ādikaṃ*, “Mahā,bhārata. Rāmāyana, etc”); D 3:183,13; M 3:167,19. The Skt *ākhyāna* is not found in the suttas or comys, but only in later works.

¹⁰ Such as the verses of Dhammapada, Udāna, Iti,vuttaka, Sutta Nipāta, Jātaka, Thera,gāthā and Therī,gāthā.

¹¹ See Ency Bsm: Gāthā.

¹² D 26/3:58-79 @ SD 36.10.

¹³ D 30/3:142-179 @ SD 36.9.

¹⁴ The Buddha in the company of 1250 disciples, as depicted in **Sela S** (M 92 = Sn 3.7/p102,20) and T1428 @ T22.873b24, provides a favourable contrast to Sela, who according to both versions had less disciples, only 300 followers (Sn 3.7/p105,3) or 500 (T1428 @ T22.873b16, & Mūla,sarvāstivāda Vinaya: Dutt 1984a:265,2). In EĀ 49.6 @ T1.798a26+29, however, the disciples of the Buddha and the disciples of Sela both number 500. In the Pali stock for the monks with the Buddha is usually 500, while the Ekottarika Āgama frequently mentions 1250; cf Anālayo 2011:419 n141. DPPN, under “Aṅguttarāpa,” highlights the significance of the large number by noting that “the country was probably rich, because we find as many as 1250 monks accompanying the Buddha.”

¹⁵ Comy interestingly notes that Sela’s 300 disciples should also be added to this number, since the Buddha, by that time, already knows that they would also go forth and thus come along for the next day’s meal (MA 3:400,1).

are for the Buddha, Sela decides to visit the Buddha himself.¹⁶ According to the Sela Sutta and the Chinese Ekottarika Āgama account, once he is in the Buddha's presence, Sela is able to verify 30 of the marks of the great man (*mahā, purisa*), while the remaining two marks are psychically revealed to him by the Buddha.¹⁷

The Dharma, guptaka Vinaya account, however, continues by saying that Sela makes an offering of beverages to the monks.¹⁸ According to the Mahīśāsaka, Mūla, sarvāsti, vāda, and Theravada Vinayas, the beverages have been prepared by Keṇiya before the Buddha and the monks are invited.¹⁹

1.2.3 Sela meets the Buddha

1.2.3.1 [§11] Once Sela is told where the Buddha is, he at once goes to meet him [§12]. [§13] Upon meeting the Buddha, he sees all the marks of the great man, except two, which the Buddha psychically reveals to him [§14]. [§15] He praises the Buddha in an effort to know him better, and sings his praises in verses [§§16-21], with the Buddha replying occasionally in verse, too. Inspired, Sela and his 300 brahmin students decide to go forth [§§22-23].

1.2.3.2 The Sela Sutta reports that Sela decides to praise the Buddha²⁰ because he wrongly thinks that when the Buddha is praised, he would reveal his true qualities.²¹ According to the Chinese account, however, Sela asks about the path to liberation. In reply, the Buddha speaks on the noble eightfold path, on account of which Sela attains streamwinning.²²

The Pali and Chinese versions agree in saying that Sela informs his disciples of his wish to go forth under the Buddha, and they reply that they wish to do likewise, too. Thus, in the Ekottarika Āgama version, Sela's wish to go forth arises after an exposition on the path to liberation that makes him a stream-

¹⁶ While **Sela S** (Sn 3.7/p106,3) says that Sela retorts twice to ascertain that he has properly understood that the Buddha has been invited, according to EĀ 49.6 @ T2.799b25, only a single question and answer is exchanged. T1428 @ T22.873b28 reports 3 such questions. **Vinaya** records that Anātha, piṇḍika, too, in similar manner, asks thrice to ascertain that the "Buddha" has been invited for a meal (V 2:155,20). In either case, psychologically, this retort is an outburst of jubilation, even religious ecstasy. The Sela S then reports that Sela instructs his disciples not to interrupt his conversation with the Buddha (he is actually going to look for the Buddha's 32 marks) (Sn 3.7/p107,-3)—a statement not found in EĀ 49.6.

¹⁷ According to EĀ 49.6 @ T2.799c10, Sela asks in verse to be shown the remaining two marks. **Sela S** does not record such a request, but only indicates that the Buddha is aware of Sela's wish, clearly through his telepathic powers (Sn 3.7/p 107,17).

¹⁸ T 1428 @ T22.873c5.

¹⁹ V 1:245,25; T1421 @ T22.151b28; Dutt 1984a:262,19. Another variation on these events of Sela S can be found in *Karma, vibhaṅgōpadeśa (Lévi 1932a:155,16), where Sela is an ascetic (*tāpasa*) and it is he who invites the Buddha for a meal.

²⁰ Sela's verses recur at **Tha 818-841**; for a study of different versions of the Sela S verse (Sn 558) or Tha 828, see Skilling 2005; cf also Baums 2009:344. Divyāvadāna (Cowell 1886:20,23, 35,1, or Vaidya 1999:12,25, 21,9), quoting certain discourses, refers to "verses [spoken by] Sela," *Śaila, gāthā*; also T W Rhys Davids 1896:94. This ref also in Chinese and Tibetan versions of (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda Vinaya (T1448 @ T24.11b6: 世羅尼頌; D (1) 'dul ba, ka 265b2 or Q (1030) khe 249b1; D (1) 'dul ba ga 225b1 or Q (1030) nge 214b5: ri gnas kyi tshigs su bead pa; cf also Lamotte 1956:260, and Lévi 1915:418. A similar reference is found in SĀ 1321 @ T2.362c12: 尸路偈, also amongst texts quotes, preceded by refs to Tha and Thī versions.

²¹ The suggestion that the Buddha can be made to praise himself if he is publicly extolled is surprising. Horner (1935) comments that "in the Buddha's Teaching this is what a foolish person does, eg Devadatta, not arahants and ...not the Tathagata" (M:H 2:335 n4). She refers to **Sampasādanīya S** (D 28), according to which the Buddha does not reveal his qualities (D 28,20,2/3:115,20 @ SD 14.14). Another relevant passage is that in **Alaggadūpama S** (M 22,38/1:140,18 @ SD 3.13) where the Buddha is stated as not being affected at all by any honour paid to him. Clearly, one would not expect that, on being praised, he would react by praising himself! Pérez-Remón is prob right in saying that "such statements of self-praise" probably "reflect more the high appreciation of the Buddha professed by his followers than the very way he spoke." (1980:70)

²² EĀ 49.6 @ T2.800a18. **Sela S** (Sn 3.7) account of the Buddha teaching Sela the path to liberation is typical of the suttas, reflecting a strategy the Buddha often uses when instructing the ready. As such, it then naturally follows that Sela requests to go forth, and then to become a streamwinner, thus verifying for himself that he has an awakened teacher before him.

winner. According to the Sela Sutta, however, after hearing the Buddha's reply (in verse), claiming to be fully awakened, Sela is inspired to ask to go forth.²³

1.2.4 Sela's awakening

1.2.41 [§24] The Buddha accepts them into the order. [§25] The meal that Keṇiya has prepared is offered. [§26] At the end of it, the Buddha gives thanks.

[§27] Sela and the brahmin youths, now monks, go into retreat and after 8 days become arhats [§28]. [§29] Sela then utters his elder's verses by way of a lion-roar praising the Buddha, and which closes the Sutta.

1.2.4.2 The Ekottarika Āgama version continues by reporting that the Buddha expounded the 4 noble truths to his new monk disciples, with the result that all of them become arahants.²⁴ The Sela Suttas, too, record that Sela and his followers became arhats, although, according to their description, this happens after the meal offering by Keṇiya and is the result of diligent practice in seclusion.²⁵

According to the Ekottarika Āgama version, Keṇiya is very pleased when he sees Sela and his brahmin disciples turn up at the meal offering as Buddhist monks.²⁶ The Ekottarika Āgama version records that at the end of the meal Keṇiya and his family goes for refuge.

The Buddha then gives a teaching to the assembly, concluding with a set of stanzas on the heavenly retribution to be expected for doing what is wholesome and meritorious.²⁷ The Sela Suttas do not record such a sermon. According to them, the Buddha expresses his appreciation of the meal offering with two stanzas on the supreme merit that accrues to those who make offerings to the sangha.²⁸

2 Keniya and Sela

2.1 KENIYA

2.1.1 The Keṇiya Jaṭila Vatthu is the story of the part-time matted-hair ascetic Keṇiya,²⁹ which forms the background and origin story for the promulgation of the rules regarding taking of drinks for monks. **The Commentaries** say that Keṇiya was a brahmin "of great halls" (*mahā,sāla*), that is, very wealthy, who became a matted-hair ascetic (*jaṭila*) to protect his wealth. He is also the protector of 5000 families. He wears the yellow robes by day, but by night he indulges in the pleasures of the senses³⁰ [4.3]. He is also mentioned in **the Sela Thera Apadāna** (Ap 389.26/318).

2.1.2 The Sela Sutta does not give us any details of the teachings the Buddha gives to Keṇiya. According to the Ekottarika Āgama version, however, Keṇiya asks for the Buddha's opinion on the brahminical claim to class superiority. In reply, the Buddha examines this claim in detail, bringing up several

²³ Mūla,sarvāstivāda Vinaya simply reports that Sela and his disciples visit the Buddha and ask to be ordained, without any dialogue between the two parties (Dutt 1984a:264,5).

²⁴ EĀ 49.6 @T2.800a29.

²⁵ Sn 3.7/p112,6. Two of the stanzas (**Sn 571 f**) declaring Sela's attainment recur as in **Sabhiya S** (Sn 3.6) as Sn 545 f as part of Sabhiya's praise of the Buddha. Compared to EĀ 49.6, **Sela S** (Sn 3.7) offers a more plausible account. Although in certain instances, a particularly gifted individual apparently is able to become an arhat in a very short time (such as Yasa, V1:17,3, or Bāhiya, U 1.10/8,13), it would be rather curious for this to occur in the case of 500 brahmin youths, ie, a "substantially large number" of newly ordained disciples. Moreover, expositions of the 4 noble truths in other discourses usually lead only to streamwinning, not to full awakening, which the discourses generally present as the result of a period of intensive solitary practice. See Analayo 2011:547.

²⁶ EĀ 49.6 @ T2.800b4. Mūla,sarvāsti,vāda Vinaya version also records that Keṇiya as being pleased to see Sela in robes, and goes on to say that Keṇiya tells Sela that as soon as the meal-offering is over, he would, too, go forth, which he then does (Dutt 1984a: 265,10).

²⁷ EĀ 49.6 @ T2.800b19.

²⁸ **Sn 568-569** are also found in Vinaya account of Keṇiya's meal offering (V 1:246,33; cf Analayo 2011:545 n81), but they are absent from the Chinese accounts of his offering in T1421 and T1428.

²⁹ V:Be Ce Se so; Ee *keniya* throughout. Spelt *keniya* in M 92, Sn & Tha @ SD 45.7a; MA 3:399.

³⁰ MA 3:399 ≈ SnA 440.

arguments also used in **the Assalayana Sutta** (M 93) and its Chinese parallels.³¹ Satisfied by the Buddha's exposition, Keṇiya goes for refuge and invites the Buddha and his monks for the next day's meal.

2.2 SELA

2.2.1 Sela is a brahmin of Aṅg'uttarāpa [§5], and a devotee of the part-time matted-hair ascetic Keṇiya [§6]. **The Sela Sutta** (M 92) records his visit to Keṇiya as he grandly prepares a meal to be offered to the Buddha and the sangha of 1250 monks residing outside Āpaṇa [§7]. Sela is enthralled the moment he hears the sound of "Buddha" [§§8-9]. His inspiration arises from his knowledge and faith in the tradition that the Buddha has the 32 marks of the great man (*mahā, purisa*) and his destiny [§§5.2+10].

He leaves at once, followed by his students, the 300 brahmin youths [§§11-12]. On meeting the Buddha, he notices all but two marks on the Buddha [§13]. The Buddha then psychically reveals to him the remaining two marks³² [§14], and Sela is deeply inspired [§15], singing his praises [§16]. A ballad-like dialogue in verse follows [§§17-21].

Sela and his 300 students then request the going-forth [§§22-23] and are admitted by the *ehi, bhikkhu* formula [§§23-24]. This means that they must have all attained at least streamwinning. Sela and his followers, now monks, all join in the meal-offering by Keṇiya [§§25-26]. Sela and his followers then go into solitary and at the end of the week, become arhats [§§27-28]. They return to the Buddha to declare their attainment through Sela's lion-roar [§29].

2.2.2 The Apadāna says that Sela's father was a wealthy brahmin named Vāsettha (Ap 1:318). Mahā Sela, the teacher of Sugandha Thera (ThaA 1:84 f), is probably identical with our Sela.

The Commentaries give an interesting detail by reporting that the Buddha first met Sela on his way to the city of Bhaddiya in Aṅga. The Buddha had gone there with a large community of monks on account of noticing that the 7-year-old Visākhā, the brahmin Sela and "many others" were ready for awakening.³³

This might give us some idea on the timing of Sela's renunciation and attaining arhathood. However, even if these events occurred early in the Buddha's ministry, much of the teachings in the Sutta itself must have been interpolated later.

Sela—like the laywoman Visākhā, and the brahmins Pokkhara, sādi, Brahmāyu and Bāvarī—are all said to have lived to the age of 120 (DA 2:413).

2.2.3 In the time of Padum'uttara Buddha,³⁴ Sela was the leader of the same guild of 300 men. Together, they built a walled residence (*pariveṇa*) for the Buddha, gave meal-offerings and did other good

³¹ EĀ 49.6 @ T2.798b19 discusses the class of one born from a couple of mixed brahmin and kshatriya class, and compares this situation to a mule, echoing the "intermarriage" parable in **Assalāyana S** (M 93,12-14/2:153,12 @ SD 40a.2); see also Analayo 2011:554 n130. EĀ 49.6 @ T2.798c14 continues with the parable of the "two brothers," comparing a clever brahmin youth to his unskilled brother, similar to **Assalāyana S** (M 93,15/2:154,3), as in EĀ 49.6 @ T2.798c21, contrasting the clever brother's bad conduct and lack of restraint with his unskilled brother's restraint and good conduct, similar to a parable in **Assalāyana S** (M 93,16/2:154,11). EĀ 49.6 @ T2.798c27 then compares a clever brahmin youth of pure descent on the mother's side to an unskilled brahmin youth of pure descent on the father's side, followed in EĀ 49.6 @ T2.799a9, by contrasting a clever brahmin youth of good conduct with a wise brahmin youth (or one who is not wise according to a 明 variant reading) who is of bad conduct. In all these cases, Keṇiya has to admit that class is surmounted by other qualities. EĀ 49.6 @ T2.799a21 then invokes the case of foreign countries comprising only masters and slaves, as in **Assalāyana S** (M 93,6/2:149,4). The last argument offered in EĀ 49.6 @ T2.799a27 briefly refers to the mythical account of the origin of class and sex distinctions after one of the cyclic destructions of the earth, in some respects paralleling the accounts in **Aggañña S** (D 27,10-16/3:84-88), SD 2.19.

³² As the case with the brahmin youth Uttara in **Brahmāyu S** (M 91,7), SD 63.8, where Comy explains that this act is to clear Uttara of all doubts so as to realize his potential of attaining non-return (MA 3:364 f). On the ethical problem of such a display, see Miln 167.

³³ *Visākhā'ti'ssā nāmaṃ akāmsu. Tassā satta, vassika, kāle dasa, balo sela, brāhmaṇassa ca aññesaṃ ca bodhaneyya, bandhavānaṃ upanissaya, sampattiṃ disvā mahā, bhikkhu, saṅgha, parivāro cārikāṃ caramāno tasmim raṭṭhe taṃ nagaraṃ pāpuṇi* (AA 1:405; DhA 1:384).

³⁴ Padum'uttara is the 15th past buddha from our buddha Gotama. For a full list of the 24 past Buddhas, see SD 36.2 (3.3).

acts. As a result of these, they received the *ehi, bhikkhu pabbajjā* in their last life.³⁵ The chief queen of past buddha Attha, dassī, before he renounced, was named Visākhā, and their son was called Sela.³⁶

3 Versions of the Sela Sutta

3.1 PARALLEL TEXTS. The Sela Sutta has a parallel in the Ekottarika Āgama, the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya, and the Bhaiṣajya, vastu (chapter on medicine) of the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda Vinaya.³⁷ The Pali versions, their Ekottarika Āgama parallel, and the accounts found in the Dharmaguptaka and (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda Vinayas report that after hearing a discourse from [546] the Buddha, Keṇiya invites him and the monks for a meal.³⁸

Keṇiya's offering of beverages to the Buddha and the monks is also recorded in the Mahīśāsaka and Theravāda Vinayas, both of which continue by describing how Keṇiya treated the Buddha to a meal, an account similar to the introductory narrative in the Sela Suttas.³⁹

3.2 RELATED TEXTS

3.2.1 The Sela Sutta (M 92 = Sn 3.7) records the meeting between the part-time matted-hair ascetic Keṇiya and the brahmin Sela [2.2], who later joins the sangha. **The Sela Thera, gāthā** records his reflections as a renunciant upon his awakening (Tha 818-841).⁴⁰ There is also **the Sela Thera Apadāna** (Ap 389/316-322), where Keṇiya is also mentioned.

3.2.2 The story of **Keṇiya**, the part-time matted-hair ascetic [2.1; 4.3], found in the Vinaya as **the Keṇiya Jaṭila Vatthu** (Mv 6.35), is the origin story of the allowance of beverages by monastics during the forbidden hours (*vikāla*).⁴¹ As the offering of the beverages involves only Keṇiya, Sela is not mentioned there at all. However, the Vinaya story gives details not found in the Sutta, that is, (1) Keṇiya see the Buddha as someone who emulates the virtuous brahmins of old in not taking food during the forbidden hours,⁴² and (2) the section of the rules beverages for monks during the forbidden hours.⁴³

3.2.3 The Sanskrit name of the Sela Sutta, **Śaila, gāthā**, is given in the Avadāna (past story) of Śroṇa Koṭikarṇa (Divy 12.13/20), found in the Vinaya of the Mūla, sarvāsti, vāda, thus: “Then the venerable Śroṇa, with leave from the Blessed One, recited in detail, gave a recital with an Aparāntika accent, passages from the Udāna, the Pārāyaṇa, the Satya, dṛṣṭa (?), **the Śaila, gāthā** [Sela Sutta], Muni, gāthā [Muni Sutta] and the sutras of the Artha, varga [Aṭṭhaka, vaggā].”⁴⁴

³⁵ SnA 2:455; MA 3:406; ThaA 3:45; also Ap 316.

³⁶ B 15.16; BA 215, 218. Attha, dassī is the 11th past buddha before our buddha Gotama: see SD 36.2 (3.3). The coincidence of the names could suggest some past life connection between the two.

³⁷ T1428 @ T22.873a25-c12 (tr Jaworski 1930:112-115; Dutt 1984a:262-266). Dharmaguptaka Vinaya account (T1428 @ T22.873a25) agrees with **Sela S** (M 92) on the location, whereas the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda Vinaya version (Dutt 1984a: 255,14) locates it at Udumā.

³⁸ Sn 3.7/p103,2 introduces Keṇiya as a matted-hair ascetic (cf **Therāpadāna** 389.26 @ Ap 318,14, where he is said to be an “ascetic,” *tāpasa*), whereas EĀ 49.6 @ T2.798b5 presents him as a brahmin. Comy (MA 3:399,5) says that the matted-hair ascetic Keṇiya comes from an eminent brahmin family. Dharmaguptaka Vinaya (T1428 @ T22.-873a26) also refers to him as a brahmin, whereas the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda Vinaya (Dutt 1984a: 262,10) speaks of him as a “seer” (*isi*).

³⁹ An offering of beverages, as in T1421 @ T22.151b28 and V 1:245,25, also in Mahāsaṅghika Vinaya (T1425 @ T22.464a29), the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda Vinaya (Dutt 1984a:262,19), and Sarvāstivāda Vinaya (T1435 @ T22.193a-23). See also Jaworski 1930:83-85, 109-115.

⁴⁰ **Tha 818-841** are embedded in **Sela S**, where they form part of the Keṇiya-Sela narrative (M 92 = Sn 3.7), SD 45.7a.

⁴¹ Mv 6.35 = V 1:244 f @ SD 45.7b.

⁴² **Keṇiya Jaṭila Vatthu** (Mv 6.35,1.5-3.1), SD 45.7b.

⁴³ Mv 6.35,6 @ SD 45.7b.

⁴⁴ *Ath'āyusmāñ śroṇo* [vl *chroṇo*] *bhagavatā kṛtāvakāśah asmāt parāntikayā guptikayā udānāt pārāyaṇāt satya, dṛṣṭah śaila, gāthā muni, gāthā artha, vargiyāṇi ca sūtrāṇi vistareṇa svareṇa svādhyāyam karoti* (ed Vaidya). See Hinüber, BEFEO 1907; Sylvain Lévi, *T'oung Pao* 1907, 1915:417 f; Édouard Chavannes, *Cinq cents contes et Apologues* II 1962:237 f: <https://archive.org/details/cinqcentscontese00chav>; J Tatelman, *A Translation and Study of*

The Śaila,gāthā is also mentioned in the Pūrṇāvadāna, the past story of of Pūrṇa of Śronāparāntaka (Divy 21.9/34 f). The caravan-leader Pūrṇa (before he is a monk) while onboard a ship on high seas, hears the sailors reciting what he notes as “beautiful songs,” that is, “the Udāna, the Pārāyaṇa, the Sthavira,-gāthā [Thera.gāthā], the Śaila,gāthā, the Muni,gāthā and the sutras of the Artha,vargīya.”⁴⁵

4 Highlights

4.1 GOING-FORTH OF SELA AND HIS FOLLOWERS. The Commentaries note that the phrase—“Well taught is the holy life” (*svākkhātāṃ brahma,cariyaṃ*) [§23]—means that Sela and his followers, the 300 brahmin youths, have gone forth by the “Come, Bhikshu” (*ehi,bhikkhu*) formula.⁴⁶ In other words, theirs is an “admission and ordination” (*pabbajjā,upasampadā*) performed by the Buddha himself, not a formal sangha act (*saṅgha,kamma*) later instituted by the Buddha, so that the order itself can ordain candidates.⁴⁷

4.2 SYMBOLIC ADAPTATIONS

4.2.1 Buddhizing brahminical ways. One of the key contributing factors to the success of early Buddhism in India is that the Buddha often and effectively adapts various terminology, concepts and even practices of the brahmins, the Jains and others as this would serve the purpose of seeing and experiencing the liberating Dharma that he has discovered. The Buddha’s approach is easy to understand because he does not really teach any religion or philosophy but a method of personal development and spiritual awakening.⁴⁸

In the Sela Sutta (M 92), we see how the Buddha skillfully adapts his teachings so as to buddhize brahminical concepts, that is, by way of using verses [4.2.2-3] and concepts, such as those of the great man (*mahā,purisa*) and his 32 marks (*lakkhana*) [1.1.3.5]. In other words, the Buddha speaks in terms of his audience so that they can easily connect with him and the Dharma. [Sn 554]

4.2.2 The Sutta verses. We have already noted the nature of the verses of the Sela Sutta [1.1.3], which are in *anuṣṭubh śloka*, an ancient and popular verse form. The *anuṣṭubh* has 32 syllables in each line. Other forms include the *triṣṭubh*, which has 4 feet of 11 syllables each (totalling 44 syllables), and the *gāyatrī*, which has 3 feet of 8 syllables each (totalling 24 syllables).⁴⁹

The most famous example of the *gāyatrī* is the *ti,saraṇa,gamana* or *three-refuge formula*: *buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi | dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi | saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*—which the Buddha calls “the Sāvitrī of the noble ones” (*ariya,sāvitti*) (Sn 457) (SnA 403).⁵⁰

4.2.3 The Buddha’s thanksgiving verses. Further, the Buddha, in his thanksgiving uses words and concepts very familiar to Sela and his followers. In Sn 568 (the first of the 2 thanksgiving verses), the Buddha mentions to the fire sacrifice and the Sāvitrī. The former is the “chief of sacrifices” of the brahmins, while the latter is “the chief of poetic metres” of the Vedas and many other brahminical works.

However, in Buddhist terms, *fire* is a common imagery for the 3 unwholesome roots: “all is on burning”—the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind—they are burning with greed, hate and delusion, says the *Āditta Pariyāya Sutta* (S 35.28). And the erstwhile fire-worshipping Kassapa brothers are converted to the true Dharma.⁵¹

The Buddha mentions the Sāvitrī as “the chief of Vedic metres” [Sn 568], alluding to Keṇiya’s own faith, despite his show of faith in the Buddha. To the Buddha, the Sāvitrī is none other than the 3 refuges themselves [4.2.2]. Keṇiya is, however, comforted and impressed. With his heart warm and softened, he is all ears to the Buddha’s teaching. However, we have no information of his destiny.

the Pūrṇāvadāna, McMaster Univ, 1988:92 & n; A Rotman (ed), *Divine Stories: Divyāvadāna pt I*, Boston, 2008:85 f & nn.

⁴⁵ *Udānāt pārāyaṇāt satya,dṛśaḥ sthavira,gāthāḥ śaila,gāthā muni,gāthā artha,vargīyāṇi ca sūtrāṇi.*

⁴⁶ SnA 456; MA 3:406, also 399. On *ehi,bhikkhu*, see *Pabbajjā*, SD 45.16 esp (1.2).

⁴⁷ See *Pabbajjā: A very short history*, SD 45.16.

⁴⁸ See *Why the Buddha hesitated*, SD 12.1 (6).

⁴⁹ See Jayawickrama 1979:69.

⁵⁰ See *Sn 457 & n* in *Sundarika Bhāra,dvāja S* (Sn 3.4), SD 22.2.

⁵¹ S 35.28 = Mv 1.21 @ SD 1.3.

4.3 KENIYA’S “ASCETICISM”

4.3.1 We have noted that Keṇiya is a very wealthy brahmin, one “of great halls” (*mahā,sāla*), who became a matted-hair ascetic (*jaṭila*) to protect his wealth. He is also the protector of 5000 families. He wears the yellow robes by day, but by night he indulged in the pleasures of the senses.⁵² In other words, he is a “career religious” or “renunciator of convenience” [2.1.1].

Like him, **Nanda the cowherd**, too, was very wealthy, but merely lived as a cowherd, guarding Anātha,piṇḍika’s cattle, to protect his own great wealth, by “evading the royal plunder” (*rāja,pīlam apahar-anto*)⁵³ through his being a cowherd. His story is found in **the Nanda Gopalaka Sutta** (U 4.3) and also told in connection with **Dh 42**.⁵⁴

4.3.2 The Dīgha Commentary says that he is an example, amongst the 8 types of ascetics,⁵⁵ of the type who supports wife and children. **The 8 types of ascetics** (*aṭṭha,vidhā tāpasā*) are (1) the supporter of wife and children (*sa,putta,bharyā*); (2) one living on wild forest produce (fruits, roots, etc) (*uñchā,-cariyā*); (3) one who refrains from food cooked over fire (*anaggi,pakkikā*); (4) one who does not cook for himself (*asāmapākā*); (5) one with “a stone in his fist” (to pound tree-bark as food) (*asma,muṭṭhikā*); (6) one who strips off bark with the teeth (for food) (*danta,vakkalikā*); (7) those who feed on windfalls (*pavatta,phala,bhojanā*); (8) one who feeds on withered leaves (*paṇḍu,palāsikā*) (DA 1:270).⁵⁶

— — —

The Discourse to Sela

M 92 = Sn 3.7⁵⁷

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time, the Blessed One was walking [peregrinating] by stages in Aṅg’uttarāpa⁵⁸ with a large community of monks, numbering 1250 of them.⁵⁹ [103]⁶⁰

1.2 In due course, they arrived at a market town of the Aṅg’uttarāpas named Āpaṇa.⁶¹

⁵² MA 3:399 ≈ SnA 440.

⁵³ Clearly, this alludes to tax evasion.

⁵⁴ U 4.3/38 f @ SD 100.6; UA 240-244 esp 241. For the story of Nanda the cowherd (based on Dh 42), see **Nanda Gopalaka Vatthu** (DhA 3.8), SD 100.7.

⁵⁵ For details, see *Journal of the PTS* 1893: 34-37.

⁵⁶ DA 1:270; also DhA 1:323; UA 241.

⁵⁷ Embedded paging is from Sn:Ee.

⁵⁸ Comy says that the term *aṅg’uttarāpa* is a dvandva comprising Aṅga and Uttarāpa. **Aṅguttarāpa** is mentioned in the origin story of the allowance for the 5 products of a cow (*pañca,goras’ādi,anujānanā*, Mv 6.34.17 = V 1:243); **Potaliya S** (M 1:359), **Laṭukikōpama S** (M 1:447); **Sela S** (M 2:146 = Sn 3.7/p102). **Aṅga** is one of the 16 great states (*mahā jana,pada*) [SD 4.18 App] of ancient north central India, and located east of Magadha, separated by the river Campā, with their capital at Campā (near modern Bhagalpur). During the Buddha’s time, Aṅga is part of Magadha, ruled by Bimbisāra, and are known as Aṅga,magadha (V 1:27×2, 28, 179; D 2:202, 203; M 2:2; J 2:211, 6:272; MA 2:196; SA 1:351; AA 3:313; DhA 3:242; SnA 2:384; CA 126). Aṅguttarāpa is located just north of the river Mahī, not too far, there is Uttarāpa (*aṅgā eva so jana,pado, gaṅgāya* [mahā,mahī,gaṅgāya] *pana yā uttarena āpo, tāsam avidūrattā uttarāpāti vuccati*, MA 3:34,21 = SnA 2:437,7).

⁵⁹ *Ekam samayaṃ bhagavā aṅguttarāpesu cārikāṃ caramāno mahatā bhikkhu,saṅghena saddhim aḍḍha,tejasehi bhikkhu,satehi*. Comy says that they are all *ehi,bhikkhu* arhats (MA 3:399): cf the “four-factored assembly” of Māgha Pūjā: **Dīgha,nakha S** (M 74), SD 16.1 (6).

⁶⁰ Embedded paging is from Sn:Ee.

⁶¹ **Āpaṇa** (“market”), so called because it has many shops and bazaars, totalling some 20,000 (MA 3:37; SnA 2:440). It was a market-town (*nigāma*) of Aṅga, according to **Āpaṇa S** (S 48.50/5:225 f), SD 10.4; or of Aṅguttarāpa, according to M 1:359, 447, Sn 103. See V 1:29; M 2:163; Comy ad S 1:1; KhA 115. Cf ThA:RD 310 n.

THE KENIYA CYCLE 1

Keniya hears about the Buddha

2 Now the matted-hair ascetic Keniya heard,

⁶²“It is said that the recluse, master Gotama, a Sakya son, who has gone forth from the Sakya clan, walking on a Dharma tour in Aṅg’uttarāpa with a large community of monks, numbering 1250 monks, has arrived in Āpaṇa.

2.2 Now concerning this master Gotama a fair report has been spread about, thus:⁶³

‘So, too, is he the Blessed One:⁶⁴ for, he is

arhat,
fully self-awakened one,
accomplished in wisdom and conduct,
well-farer,
knower of worlds,
peerless guide of persons to be tamed,⁶⁵
teacher of gods and humans,
awakened,
blessed.

2.3 Having realized, by his own direct knowledge,

this world with its gods, its Māras and its Brahmās,
this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its rulers and people,
he makes it known to others.

He teaches the Dharma, good in the beginning, good in the middle, good in the end,
both in the spirit and in the letter.

He proclaims the holy life that is entirely complete and pure.’

It is good to see such arhats.’”

Meeting and instruction

3 Then the matted-hair ascetic Keniya approached to the Blessed One and exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous and friendly exchange was concluded, the matted-hair ascetic Keniya sat down at one side.

3.2 Then, as the matted-hair ascetic Keniya, was sitting thus at one side, the Blessed One instructed, inspired, roused and gladdened⁶⁶ him with a Dharma talk.

⁶² From here to “a fair report has been spread about...” (*taṃ bhavantaṃ gotamaṃ...kitti,saddo abbhuggato*) explained by Comy (*ittham,bhūtākhyān’atthe upayoga,vacanaṃ, tassa kho pana bhot gotamassāti attho*) as “an accusative of specification state,” usu tr as “with reference to” (the master Gotama) (see Warder, *Introduction to Pali*, 1963:17 f); or as “accusative of respect, “A report has arise in respect of Gorana, about Gotama” (Tha:N 278 n “p103,6.”

⁶³ For details on these 9 virtues of the Buddha, see **Buddhānussati**, SD 15.7b.

⁶⁴ Alt tr: “For the following reasons, too, he is the Blessed One [the Lord]...” On the meaning of *itī pi so*, see CPD: *itī: ...kitti,saddo abbhuggato: “~ pi so bhagavā: araham sammā-sambuddho...”* (“for the following reasons, too, he is a *bhagavā*: because he is *araham*...”), V 3:1,13 = D 1:49,27 = M 2:133,22 = S 1:219,31 = A 3:312,8, qu Vism 198,4 and MahvṬ 26,11 (VA 112,4 = DA 146,5 ≠ Vism 198,8: *so bhagavā ~ pi araham ~ pi sammāsambuddho, ... iminā ca iminā ca kāraṇenā ti vuttaṃ hoti*). Translating *itī pi so* this way explains the double occurrence of Bhagavā. See L S Cousins, “Review of *Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*,” in *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 4, 1997:165.

⁶⁵ *Purisa,damma sārathī*. Here *-damma* (adj) is grd, meaning “to be tamed or restrained,” often spoken of a young bullock (M 1:225, *bala,gāvā damma,gāvā*, “the strong cattle and cattle to be tamed,” ie bulls and young steers); also of other animals: *assa,damma,sārathī*, a horse trainer (A 2:112); It 80. In *purisa,damma sārathī*, fig (“the trainer of the human steer”) of unconverted persons, likened to a refractory bullocks; D 1:62 (wr *-dhamma*) = 2:93 = 3:5; M 2:38; A 2:112; Vv 17.13; cf VvA 86.

Keṇiya offers a meal

3.3 Then, when the Blessed One had instructed, inspired, roused and gladdened the matted-hair ascetic Keṇiya with a Dharma talk, he said this to the Blessed One,

“May master Gotama along with the community of monks accept a meal from me tomorrow.”

3.4 When this was said, the Blessed One said this to the matted-hair ascetic,

“Great indeed, Keṇiya, [104] is the community of monks, 1250 in number, and you are deeply devoted⁶⁷ to the brahmins.”

3.5 For the second time, the matted-hair ascetic Keṇiya said this to the Blessed One,

“Although, master Gotama, the community of monks is large, number 1250 monks, and I am deeply devoted to the brahmins,

still may master Gotama along with the community of monks accept a meal from me tomorrow.”

3.6 For the second time, the Blessed One said this to the matted-hair ascetic,

“Great indeed, Keṇiya, is the community of monks, 1250 in number, and you are deeply devoted to the brahmins.”

3.7 For the third time, the matted-hair ascetic Keṇiya said this to the Blessed One,

“Although, master Gotama, the community of monks is large, number 1250 monks, and I am deeply devoted to the brahmins,

still may master Gotama along with the community of monks accept a meal from me tomorrow.”

4 The Blessed One consented by his silence.

4.2 Then, the matted-hair ascetic Keṇiya, knowing the Blessed One’s consent, rose from this seat, went to his own ashram.⁶⁸

Keṇiya’s preparations

4.3 Upon arriving at his ashram, he addressed his kinsmen and blood relations, friends and companions, thus,

“Listen to me, good kinsmen and blood relations, friends and companions, the recluse Gotama, along with his community of monks, has been invited by me for a meal tomorrow. Please help around with the menial tasks.”⁶⁹

“Yes, sir,” the matted-hair Keṇiya’s kinsmen and blood relations, friends and companions replied to him in assent.

4.4 Some dug ovens (in the ground), others split wood, some washed bowls and vessels, others set up the water pots, some laid out the seats. The matted-hair ascetic Keṇiya himself prepared the circular pavilion.⁷⁰

THE SELA CYCLE 1⁷¹

The brahmin Sela

5 At that time, the brahmin Sela was living in Āpaṇa.⁷² [105]

⁶⁶ “[I]nstructed, inspired, roused and gladdened”: on the difficulties of this phrase, *sandassesi samādapesi samuttejesi sampahaṃsesi*, see Cousins 1997:272.

⁶⁷ “Deeply devoted to,” *abhippasanna*, to be inspired by someone to the extent of to be devoted to him or have faith in him. The benefit is that of feeling serene and blissful as a result.

⁶⁸ *Vinaya* account breaks off here, and gives the account on the Buddha’s promulgating the 5 allowances on drink for monks (Mv 6.35,6).

⁶⁹ *Suñantu me bhonto mitt’āmaccā ñāti, sālohitā, samaṇo me gotamo nimantito svātānāya bhattaṃ saddhiṃ bhikkhu, saṅghena, yena me kāya, veyyāvāṭikāṃ kareyyāthā’ti*. The phrase *kāya, veyyāvāṭika* lit refers to “service with the body.”

⁷⁰ *Keṇiyo pana jaṭilo sāmāṃ yeva maṇḍala, mālaṃ paṭiyādeti*. Comy explains *maṇḍala, māla* as a “cloth pavilion,” ie a cloth-covered tentage (*dussa, maṇḍala*, MA 3:400), or a canopied pavilion (SnA 447).

⁷¹ This cycle, esp §§5-10, in some ways, parallels **Ambaṭṭha S** (D 3,1-5), SD 21.3.

⁷² The locale is the same as that of **(Gaha,pati) Potaliya S** (M 54,**), SD 43.8.

5.2 He was a master of the Three Vedas, along with their invocations and rituals, phonology and etymology, and the Iti,hāsa Purāṇas⁷³ as the fifth; learned in the vedic padas,⁷⁴ grammarian,⁷⁵ and well versed in the Lokāyata [nature-lore]⁷⁶ and the marks of the great man,⁷⁷

5.3 He was instructing 300 brahmin youths in the (vedic) mantras.

6 At that time, the matted-hair ascetic Keṇiya was deeply devoted to the brahmin Sela.

6.2 Then, the brahmin Sela, surrounded by 300 brahmin youths, walking about, stretching their legs, approached the matted-hair ascetic's ashram.

Sela meets Keṇiya

7 The brahmin Sela saw, in the matted-hair ascetic's ashram, that some were digging ovens (in the ground), others were splitting wood, some were washing bowls and vessels, others were setting up the water pots, some were laying out the seats, and that the matted-hair ascetic Keṇiya himself was preparing the circular pavilion.

7.2 Seeing the matted-hair ascetic, he said this to him,⁷⁸

“What now, is master Keṇiya receiving a groom, or receiving a bride, or preparing a great sacrifice, or has he invited the Bimbi,sāra, the rajah of Magadha, and his army for a meal tomorrow?”⁷⁹

8 “No, master Sela, there is neither receiving of a groom nor receiving of a bride, neither preparing for a great sacrifice, nor has the Bimbi,sāra, the rajah of Magadha, and his army been invited for a meal tomorrow.

8.2 But I have prepared a great sacrifice for myself.

8.3 There is the master Gotama, *the recluse, master Gotama, a Sakya son, who has gone forth from the Sakya clan, walking on a Dharma tour in Aṅguttarapā with a large community of monks, numbering 1250 monks, has arrived in Āpaṇa.*

8.4 Now [106] concerning this master Gotama a fair report has been spread about, thus:

*‘So, too, is he the Blessed One: for, he is
arhat,
fully self-awakened one,
accomplished in wisdom and conduct,
well-farer,
knower of worlds,
peerless guide of persons to be tamed,
teacher of gods and humans,
awakened,
blessed.*

8.5 I have invited him, along with the community of monks, for a meal tomorrow.”

⁷³ Iti,hāsa Purāṇas are the oral tradition of brahminical legends of kings and sages.

⁷⁴ *Padako veyyākaraṇo*, ie, well versed in the *pada,pāṭha* of Sanskrit grammar. Technically, this refers to the *pada* (or literal, word for word) method of reciting (or writing) Veda sentences, ie, “a method of arranging each word of a Vedic text separately in its original form [cf *pada*] without regard to the rules of [sandhi]; cf *krama-* and *samhitā-pāṭha.*” (SED). By itself, *pada* can here be translated as “word or word structure.”

⁷⁵ On *veyyākaraṇa*, see BHSD: sv *vyākaraṇa*, = *vaiyākaraṇa* (p517).

⁷⁶ *Lokāyata*. This seems to be the early meaning of the term. Its reference of the materialistic philosophy of Cārvāka is apparently later: see Rhys Davids, D:RD 1:166-172. See **Lokāyatikā Brāhmaṇā S** (A 9.38/4:428-432), SD 35.15. See also Jayatilleke 1963:48-58 (§§55-67).

⁷⁷ For details, see **Buddhānussati**, SD 15.7(4.1) n.

⁷⁸ From here (§7.2) until §10.1—on Sela's first hearing of the Buddha—the account closely parallels that of Anātha,piṇḍika's own experience, upon seeing the meal-offering preparations of his brother-in-law, the seth of Rāja,gaha's residence (Cv 6.1 @ V 2:254 f). Anātha,piṇḍika's first meeting with the Buddha is also recounted in (**Buddho'ti**) **Sudatta S** (S 10.8), SD 87.10.

⁷⁹ *Kim nu bhoto keṇiyassa āvāho vā bhavissati, vivāho vā bhavissati, mahā,yañño vā paccupaṭṭhito, rājā vā māga-dho seniyo bimbisāro nimantito svātanāya saddhiṃ bala,kāyenā'ti.*

Sela hears “Buddha”

9 “Did you say, ‘Buddha,’ sir?”

“I said, ‘Buddha,’ Sela.”

“Did you say, ‘Buddha,’ sir?”

“I said, ‘Buddha,’ Sela.”

10 Then this occurred to the brahmin Sela,

“This sound, ‘Buddha,’ is very difficult to be heard in the world!”⁸⁰

The 2 destinies⁸¹

10.2 The 32 marks of the great man, however, have come down to us through the mantras.

⁸²For the great man who is accomplished in this way, there are only two destinies, none other.⁸³

If he lives in a **house**, he will become a wheel-turner [a universal monarch], a just Dharma-rajah [a king of truth], conqueror of the four quarters, a country blessed with stability, and he is possessor of the seven jewels.⁸⁴

10.3 These are **the 7 jewels** (*satta ratana*), that is to say:⁸⁵

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| (1) the wheel jewel, | <i>cakka,ratana</i> |
| (2) the elephant jewel, | <i>hatthi,ratana</i> |
| (3) the horse jewel, | <i>assa,ratana</i> |
| (4) the gem jewel, | <i>maṇi,ratana</i> |
| (5) the woman jewel, | <i>itthi,ratana</i> |
| (6) the houselord jewel, and | <i>gaha.pati,ratana</i> |
| (7) the commander jewel as the seventh. | <i>pariṇāyaka,ratana</i> |

More than a thousand sons will be his, brave, heroic in form, crushing the armies of others.

He dwells over this earth, bound by the ocean, holding it in his sway with neither rod nor sword.⁸⁶

10.4 However, if he were to leave the house for **the homeless life**, he becomes the arhat [worthy], fully self-awakened one, rolling back the veil in the world.⁸⁷

Sela and the brahmin youths

11 But where now, master Keṇiya, is the master Gotama, the arhat, the fully self-awakened one, dwelling?

11.2 When this was said, the matted-hair ascetic Keṇiya took the brahmin by the right arm, and said,

⁸⁰ *Atha kho selassa brāhmaṇassa etad ahosi “ghoso’pi kho eso dullabho lokasmim yad idaṃ buddho’ti* [Be:Ka *yadidaṃ buddho buddho’ti*]. The word **ghosa** here as used in Skt (*ghoṣa*) suggests “news.”

⁸¹ This who section on “the 2 destinies” recurs mutatis mutandis in **Brahmāyu S** (M 91,5), SD 63.8.

⁸² From hereon, this whole section on “the 2 destinies,” as at **Lakkhaṇa S** (D 30,1.1.2-1.1.3), SD 36.9.

⁸³ *Āgatāni kho pan’amhākāṃ mantesu dva-t,timsa,mahā.purisa,lakkhaṇāni, yehi samannāgatassa mahā,purisassa dve,yeva gatiyo bhavanti anaññā.*

⁸⁴ *Sace agāraṃ ajjhāvasati, rājā hoti cakka,vattī dhammiko dhamma,rājā cātura-anto vijitāvī janapada-t,thāvariya-p,patto satta,ratana,samannāgato.* This and the rest of the section is said of the Bodhisattva if he had not renounced the world: see **Ambaṭṭha S** (D 3,1.5/1:88 f), SD 21.3. See foll n.

⁸⁵ See **Ambaṭṭha S** (D 3,1.5/1:88 f) = **Mahāpadāna S** (D 14.1.31/2:16 f) = **Cakka,vatti Siha,nāda S** (D 26.2a/-3:59) = **Sela S** (Sn p106; cf SnA 450 = DA 1:250); for details, see **Mahā Sudassana S** (D 17.1.7-17/2:172-177); cf Miln 37 f; Divy 467.012-016.

⁸⁶ *So imaṃ pathaviṃ sāgara,pariyantaṃ adaṇḍena asatthena dhammena abhivijjiya ajjhāvasati.*

⁸⁷ *Sace kho pana agāraṃ anagāriyaṃ pabbajati, araham hoti sammā,sambuddho loke vivaṭṭa-c,chado.* On “rolling back the veil in the world,” **loke vivaṭṭa-c,chado**, Comy on M 91 explains that the world, enveloped by the darkness of defilements (*kiles’andha.kāra*), is covered by seven veils (*chadana*): those of lust, hate, delusion, conceit, views, ignorance and immorality. Having removed these veils, the Buddha abides, generating light all around. Thus, he is one who rolls back the veil in the world. Alternatively, **vivaṭṭa,chada** can be resolved as *vivaṭṭa* and *vicchada*, ie, he is rid of the rounds (*vaṭṭa,rahita*) and rid of veils (*chadana,rahita*). By the absence of the rounds (*sam-sāra*), he is an arhat; by the absence of veils (defilements), he is the fully self-awakened one (MA 3:367). For a philological discussion on the term’s possible orig form and meaning, see Sn:N 238 n365,28.

[107] “Where that cloud-grey line of forest is.”⁸⁸

12 Then the brahmin Sela, along with the 300 brahmin youths, approached the Blessed One.

12.2 Then the brahmin Sela addressed the brahmin youths,

“Come quietly, sirs, placing foot after foot.”⁸⁹ For the Blessed Ones are as hard to approach as lions living alone.⁹⁰

12.3 So should I consult with the recluse Gotama, sirs, please do not interrupt me while I’m in the midst of conversing.⁹¹ Wait, sirs, until the end of my conversation.⁹²

Sela sees the Buddha’s 32 marks

13 Then the brahmin Sela approached the Blessed One, and exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous and friendly exchange was concluded, the brahmin Sela sat down at one side.

13.2 Sitting thus as one side, the brahmin Sela looked for the 32 marks of the great man on the Blessed One’s body.

13.3 The brahmin Sela, however, saw all the 32 marks of the great man on the Blessed One’s body, except for two of them. About these two marks of the great man, he was doubtful, perplexed, uncertain and unconvinced, that is to say, the sheath-covered, hidden by clothing, and the length of the tongue.⁹³

13.4 Then it occurred to the Blessed One,

“This brahmin Sela sees all my 32 marks of the great man, except for two of them. About these two marks of the great man, he is doubtful, perplexed, uncertain and unconvinced, that is to say, the sheath-covered hidden by clothing and the length of the tongue.

14 Then the Blessed One worked a psychic manifestation so that the brahmin Sela saw the Blessed One’s sheath-covered, [108] hidden by clothing.⁹⁴

14.2 Then the Blessed One extending his tongue, licked his earlobes forwards and backwards, and stroked both his nostrils forwards and backwards, and covered the whole circle of his forehead with his tongue.⁹⁵

Confirming the Buddha’s state

15 Then this occurred to the brahmin Sela:

“Fully accomplished indeed, not otherwise, is the recluse Gotama in the 32 marks of the great man, but I still do not know whether is Buddha or not [awakened or not].⁹⁶

15.2 Now I’ve heard it said amongst the brahmins who are old, aged, teachers, and teachers of teachers,⁹⁷ saying,⁹⁸

⁸⁸ *Yen’esā bho sela nīla,vana,rājīti.*

⁸⁹ *Appa,saddā bhonto āgacchantu pade padam [Se pāde pādām] nikkhipantā.*

⁹⁰ *Durāsadā [Be:Ka dūra,saddā] hi te bhagavanto, sīhā’va eka,carā.* Comy stresses that the imagery of the solitary lion is to highlight diligence (*appamāda*) (MA 3:401).

⁹¹ *Yadā cāham bho samaṇena gotamena saddhiṃ manteyyaṃ mā me bhonto antar’antarā katham opātetha.*

⁹² *Kathā,pariyosānam me bhavanto āgamentūti.*

⁹³ *Dvīsu mahā,purisa,lakkhaṇesu kaṅkhati vicikicchati nādhimuccati na sampasīdati koso,hite ca vattha,guyhe pahūta,jivhatāya ca.*

⁹⁴ *Atha kho bhagavā tathā,rūpaṃ iddhābhisaṅkhāraṃ abhisaṅkhāsi, yathā addasa selo brāhmaṇo bhagavato koso,hitam vattha,guyham.* The phrase “sheath-covered, hidden by clothing” (*koso,hita vattha,guyha*) is meant here to be deliberately vague on account of propriety.

⁹⁵ *Atha kho bhagavā jivham ninnāmetvā ubhopi kaṇṇa,sotāni anumasi paṭimasi, ubho’pi nāsika,sotāni anumasi paṭimasi, kevalam pi nalāṭṭa,maṇḍalam jivhāya chādesi.*

⁹⁶ *Buddho vā no buddho,* here *buddha* can be either a noun or a past participle, as in §19 (Sn 558d).

⁹⁷ **KeṇiyaJaṭila Vatthu** (Mv 1.6.35), the Vinaya account of Keṇiya, gives the names of 10 ancient seers: see §7.1 @ SD 45.7b. The Keṇiya sees the Buddha as emulating these ancient brahminical seers.

⁹⁸ This is, of course, Sela’s own surmise. For, in the Buddha’s teaching, only the foolish, not arhats, act in this way: see eg **Sampasādanīya S** (D 28,20/3:115), SD 14.14. On “reveal themselves,” *attānam patukaroti*, cf V 2:186; A 3:123.

‘Those who are arhats, fully self-awakened one will reveal themselves when their praises are being uttered.’⁹⁹ What now if I were to praise the Blessed One to his face with appropriate verses.¹⁰⁰

15.3 Then the brahmin Sela praised the Buddha to his face with appropriate verses, thus:

<p>16 <i>Paripunṇa, kāyo suruci sujāto cāru, dassano suvanṇa, vaṇṇo 'si bhagavā susukka, dāṭho 'si viriyavā</i>¹⁰³</p>	<p>Fully complete¹⁰¹ is your body, radiant, well-formed,¹⁰² lovely to behold, golden in the Blessed One's complexion, of pure white teeth, heroic in effort. Sn 548 = Tha 818</p>
<p><i>Narassa hi sujātassa ye bhavanti viyañjanā sabbe te tava kāyasmim mahā, purisalakkhaṇā.</i></p>	<p>For, whatever of a man well-born,¹⁰⁴ those marks¹⁰⁵ that be, they are all on your body, the marks of the great man. Sn 549 = Tha 819</p>
<p><i>Pasanna, netto sumukho brahā</i>¹⁰⁷ <i>uju patāpavā majjhe samaṇa, saṅghassa ādicco 'va virocasi</i></p>	<p>Clear are your eyes, fair is your face,¹⁰⁶ large [perfect], straight, splendid (like a flame) in the midst of a community of recluses, blazing like the sun. Sn 550 = Tha 820</p>
<p><i>Kalyāṇa, dassano bhikkhu kañcana, sannibha-t, taco kim te samaṇa, bhāvena evaṃ uttama, vaṇṇino</i></p>	<p>A monk, good [beautiful] to look at, with skin resembling gold— but what is the ascetic's state to you, one of such excellent appearance. Sn 551 = Tha 821</p>
<p><i>Rājā arahasi bhavitum cakka, vattī rathēsabho. cātur-anto vijitāvī, jambu, saṇḍassa</i>¹⁰⁹ [109]</p>	<p>You are worthy of being a king, a wheel-turner, the bellwether of warriors,¹⁰⁸ a conqueror with the fourfold force, supreme lord of Jambu, nada [India].¹¹⁰ Sn 552 = Tha 822</p>

⁹⁹ *Ye te bhavanti arahanto sammā, sambuddhā, te sake vaṇṇe bhaññāmāne attānaṃ pātukarontīti.* This is, of course, Sela's own view, prob based on brahminical tradiiton.

¹⁰⁰ *Yam nūṇaṃ samaṇaṃ gotamaṃ sammukhā sārappāhi gāthāhi abhitthaveyyan 'ti.*

¹⁰¹ “Fully complete,” *paripunṇa*, ie, with all the 32 marks (MA 3:402).

¹⁰² “Well-formed,” *sujāta*, which Comys explain as “endowed with height and breadth, endowed with form, and well born” (*āroha, pariñāha, sampattiyā sañṭhāna, sampattiyā ca sunibbato*, MA 3:402 = SnA 2:453 = ThaA 3:46); or simply, “of good build” (*susanṭhito*, J 4:483). See also DA 1:283).

¹⁰³ Ce Ee Ke Se *viriyavā*.

¹⁰⁴ *Sujata* here (referring to birth or class) should be taken as intentionally different from SN 548b (where it refers to complexion).

¹⁰⁵ These “marks” (*viyañjana* or *vyāñjana*) refer to both the 32 major marks and the 80 lesser one. For details on the 32 marks, see **Lakkhaṇa S** (D 30), SD 36.9 & **Brahmāyu S** (M 9,91/2:136 f), SD 63.8: see SD 36.9 (2) for sutta refs. On the 80 lesser marks, see MilnT 17: for full list, see SD 36.9 (4.3); see also BHSD: *anuvyañjana*.

¹⁰⁶ “Fair us your face,” *sumukha*, “like the face of the full moon” (MA 3:402). Cf *Suvarṇa, prabhāsa Sūtra*, ch 12: “The countenance of the Buddha is like the clear full moon” (R Robinson, *Chinese Buddhist Verse*, London, 1954).

¹⁰⁷ Be:Ka Ke Se *brahmā*. Comy: “large [perfect] in being endowed with height and breadth” (*āroha, pari-nāha, sampattiyā brahā*, ThaA 3:46). The *vi brahmā* (n & adj) possibly arose because Comy continues by explaining that “it is straight like the straightness of Brahma” (*brahm 'uju, gatattāya uju*).

¹⁰⁸ *Rathēsabha* = *ratha* (lit “chariot”) + *usabha* (“leading bull”), but here *ratha* has a secondary sense (possibly a synecdoche) for (Skt *ratha*) “warrior, hero, champion” (SED); *rathi*, “charioteer,” is only one of its senses here. See SnA 321 ad Sn 303; see Tha:N 242 ad Tha 822.

¹⁰⁹ Be:Ka *jambu, maṇḍassa*.

¹¹⁰ Comys however add that the wheel-turner is not only lord of Jambu, dīpa (India), but also of the 4 great continents (*dīpa*) (SnA 2:453; VvA 105), even of all the world and the whole universe! (ApA 407).

*Khattiyā¹¹¹ bhoja, rājāno,
anuyantā¹¹³ bhavantu te.
rājābhirājā manuj'indo
rajjam kārehi gotama*

Nobles, princes and kings¹¹².
will be your vassals [tributaries].
The king of kings,¹¹⁴ lord of man!
Rule, Gotama!

Sn 553 = Tha 823

[The Blessed One:]

17 *Rājā'ham asmi selāti (bhagavā)¹¹⁵
dhamma, rājā anuttaro
dhammena cakkam vattemi
cakkam appaṭivattiyam*

A king am I, Sela (said the Blessed One),¹¹⁶
supreme Dharma, rajah [the king of truth],
by Dharma [truth] I turn the wheel,¹¹⁷
a wheel that rolls not back.¹¹⁸

Sn 554 = Tha 824

[Sela:]

18 *Sambuddho paṭijjānāsi
(iti selo brāhmaṇo)
dhamma, rājā anuttaro.
dhammena cakkam vattemi,
iti bhāsasi gotama.*

You claim to be self-awakened,
(thus said Sela the brahmin.)¹¹⁹
a supreme Dharma-rajah [king of truth],
by Dharma [truth] is the wheel turned—
thus you say, Gotama.

Sn 555 = Tha 825

*Ko nu senā, pati bhoto
sāvako satthur-anvayo
ko te'tam¹²⁰ anuvatteti
dhamma, cakkam pavattitam.*

But who is the master's general,
the disciple for goes the the teacher's way?
Who will, after you, keep turning the
wheel that has been kept rolling by you?

Sn 556 = Tha 826

[The Blessed One:]

19 *Mayā pavattitam cakkam
(selāti bhagavā)
dhamma, cakkam anuttaram
sāri, putto anuvatteti
anujāto¹²³ tathāgataṃ.*

Turned is the wheel by me,
(Sela, said the Blessed One,)¹²¹
the supreme Dharma-wheel,
Sāriputta¹²² turns it after me [turns it as I do],
taking after the Tathagata.

Sn 557 = Tha 827

¹²⁴ *Abhiññeyyam abhiññātam*

¹²⁵ What is to be known has been known,

¹¹¹ Ee Ce Se so; Be *bhogi*; Ke *bhoga*.

¹¹² Alt tr: “Kshatriyas, minor kings and rajahs.” For a technical n on *bhoja*, see Tha:N 242 n823.

¹¹³ Ce Ee Ke Se *anuyuttā*.

¹¹⁴ Comy identifies this as the “wheel-turner” (*cakka, vatti*) (SnA 453,24).

¹¹⁵ Be omits.

¹¹⁶ *Selāti bhagavā* does not fit the metre, and was prob added by the reciters for clarity. However, it does if we omit *bhagavā*, as in a vl. The same applies to *iti selo brāhmaṇo* [Sn 555], and to *selāti bhagavā* [Sn 557, 567].

¹¹⁷ Comy: The wheel of power (*āṇā, cakka*) says, “Get rid of this! Make that happen!” The wheel of Dharma is that beginning with “Dharma as full learning” (*pariyatti, dhamma*), “This, bhikshus, is the noble truth of suffering.” (MA 3:402).

¹¹⁸ Alt tr: “a wheel whose rolling cannot be stopped.”

¹¹⁹ This line is not part of the verse: see Sn 554a n above.

¹²⁰ Be Ke Se *ko te'mam*; Be vll *ko nu te'ma, ko te tam*; Ee Se *ko te imam*. *Ko te'tam* seems to be the best reading. However, *imam*, “this” is also possible.

¹²¹ This line is not part of the verse: see Sn 554a n above.

¹²² Comys say that Sāriputta is sitting nearby (MA 3:404 = SnA 454 = ThaA 3:48). **(Ti) Putta S** lists 3 kinds of children: the low-born (*avajāta*), the heir (*anujāta*) and the high-born (*atijāta*) (It 3.3.5/63), SD 90.4. Here, however, “after me” is idiomatic in the sense of “heir of Dharma” (M 2:143), or emulating the Buddha, and does allude to any succession of status.

¹²³ On *anujāta*, cf “Taking after you, a great hero, a naga, a naga's son” (*anujātam mahāvīram, nāgam nāgassa orasan'ti*, Tha 1279 & comy; cf ItA 2:43; J 6:380) & Tha:RD 312.3 n; cf Tha:N 223 n679 on *anubuddha*.

*bhāvetabbañ ca bhāvitam
pahātabbam pahīnam me
tasmā buddho'smi brāhmaṇa.*

what is to be cultivated has been cultivated,
what is to be abandoned has been abandoned by me—
therefore, brahmin, awakened [the Buddha]¹²⁶ am I.¹²⁷

Sn 558 = Tha 828

*Vinayassu mayi kaṅkham
adhimuccassu¹²⁸ brāhmaṇa
dullabham dassanam hoti
sambuddhānam abhiñhaso*

Rid of any doubt in me,
resolve yourself, brahmin, with faith:
ever difficult to see
is the self-awakened one. [110]

Sn 559 = Tha 829

*Yesam ve¹²⁹ dullabho loke
pātubhāvo abhiñhaso
so'ham brāhmaṇa sambuddho
salla,katto anuttaro*

Difficult it is for those in the world to find
their appearance, ever difficult—
that self-awakened one am I, brahmin—
a peerless dart-remover.¹³⁰

Sn 560 = Tha 830

*Brahma,bhūto atitulo
māra,sena-p,pamaddano
sabbāmitte vasī katvā
modāmi akuto,bhayo*

Having become perfect,¹³¹ unequalled
crusher of Māra's hosts,¹³²
having overcome all enemies,
I rejoice, everywhere free from fear.

Sn 561 = Tha 831

20 [Sela:]

*Imam bhonto nisāmetha,
yathā bhāsati cakkhumā.
salla,katto mahā,vīro,*

Hear this, sirs,
what the one with the eyes¹³³ says,
the surgeon [dart-remover], the great hero—

¹²⁴ This verse occurs in **Brahmāyu S** (M 2:143); **Sela S** (M 92; Sn 558 = Tha 828); Nm 1:21, 2:460; Nc:Be 64, 85; Kvu 86, 88, 107, 108, 170, 216×2; quoted at UA 84, ItA 1:149, ThaA 3:49, BA 25, NmA 1:186, PmA 1:215, VA 1:115.

¹²⁵ Here, we must take *abhiññeyyam abhiññātam* as tt, as the whole verse refers to the 4 noble truths. However, the sequence here is 1-4-2-3, which seems unique to this verse. For the traditional sequence of the truths and other details, see **Dhamma,cakka Pavattana S** (S 56.11,5-8) + SD 1.1 (6.2). See Cousins' useful n, 1997:274.

¹²⁶ Here *buddho* can be either a noun ("the Buddha") or a past participle ("awakened"), as in § 15.

¹²⁷ Lines cd here recur in **Brahmāyu S** (M 91,31/2:143).

¹²⁸ Comy: "'Resolve yourself' means 'Make a resolution, have faith that this is the fully self-awakened one'" (*adhimuccasūti adhimokkham kara, sammā,sambuddho'ti saddaha*, ThaA 3:49). Hence, we can also render this simply as "Have faith..."

¹²⁹ Sn 560 vo; Tha 830 ve. Here *ve* is prob the Eastern form for *vo* (from Skt *vas*), "for us" (*tumhākam*), as at Dh 315 = Sn 333 (*khaṇo ve mā upaccagā*, "let not the moment pass you by!"), where both DhA 3:489,6-7 & SnA 339,2 gloss *ve* as *tumhākam*). See Lüders, *Beobachtungen*, 1954 §22 & Sn:Ee 58 n6. For reverse equivalence of *vo* for *ve* (emphasis) for *vo*, see eg *idaṃ vo ñātīnam hotu* (Khp 6), SD 2.7. See Tha:N 190 n403. For other Easternisms, see Sn:N 150 f n7.

¹³⁰ Ie, removing the "barbs" (*salla*) of suffering: see eg **Salla S** (Sn 3.8 esp 593*). Comy: "'surgeon' means one who cuts of the barbs of lust and so on" (*salla,katto'ti rāg'ādi,salla,kattano*, ThaA 3:49,33), showing the etym from *kart-tṛ*; cf Skt *śalya,kartṛ*, "surgeon" (SED), in **Cūḷa Māluṅkyā,putta** (M 63), ~ is used literally meaning "dart-remover," but here metaphorically; cf "the Buddha is like a dart-remover because he removes all darts of views" (*sabba,diṭṭhi,sall'uddharanato salla,katto viya buddho*, KhpA 21). **Niddesa** the darts (*salla*) are listed as those of lust, hate, delusion, conceit, view, sorrow, and doubt: *rāga~ dosa~ moha~ māna~ diṭṭhi~ soka~ kathaṅkathā~* (Nm 59). See Tha:N 243 ad 830.

¹³¹ Comy: *brahma,bhūta* means "become the best" (*seṭṭha,bhūto*, SnA 455,7).

¹³² Comy says Māra's host here, ie, "all the enemies" (*sabbāmitte*) (next line), refers to the "5 kinds of Māra" (*pañca.māra*): as the 5 aggregates (*khandha,māra*), as defilements (*kilesa,māra*), as the 4 karmic doors of body, speech and mind (*abhisankhāra,māra*), as death (*maccu,māra*), and as a devaputra or deity (*deva.putta,māra*) (SnA 455,11).

¹³³ "The one with the eyes," *cakkhumā*. On the 5 eyes of the Buddha (Buddha-eye, universal eye, Dharma-eye, divine eye, and physical eye), see **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26,20.6/1:168), SD 1.11

M 2.52
Tha 16.1.6

sīho 'va nadatī vane.

*Brahma, bhūtaṃ atitulāṃ,
māra, sena-p, pamaddanaṃ.
ko disvā na-p, pasīdeyya,
api kaṇhābhijātiko¹³⁵*

*Yo maṃ icchati anvetu
yo vā nicchati gacchatu
idhāhaṃ pabbajissāmi
vara, paññassa santike*

21 [Brahmin youths:]

*Etañ ce¹³⁶ ruccati bhoto
sammā, sambuddha, sāsanaṃ¹³⁷
mayam, pi pabbajissāma
vara, paññassa santike*

22 [Sela:]

*Brāhmaṇā ti, satā ime
yācanti¹³⁸ pañjalī, katā
brahma, cariyāṃ carissāma
bhagavā tava santike*

[The Blessed One:]

23 *Svākkhātāṃ brahma, cariyāṃ
(selāti bhagavā)
sanditṭhikāṃ akālikāṃ
yattha amoghā pabbajjā
appamattassa sikkhato 'ti*

Majjhima Nikāya 2, Majjhima Paṇṇāsa 5, Brāhmaṇa Vagga 2
[Khuddaka Nikāya 8] 16, Vīsati Nipāta 1, Paṭhama Vagga 6

he roars like a lion in the wood. **Sn 562 = Tha 832**

Having become Brahmā,¹³⁴ unequalled
crusher of Māra's hosts—
having seen him, who wouldn't have faith,
even those born lowly into the dark. **Sn 563 = Tha 833**

Let him who wishes follow me,
or, who wishes not, let him go.
Here will I go forth
in the presence of the wisely noble one. **Sn 564 = Tha 834**

If the master approves
of the teaching of the fully self-awakened,
we, too, will go forth
in the presence of the wisely noble one. **Sn 565 = Tha 835**

These 300 brahmins,
with palms together, beg of you,
let us live the holy life,
O Blessed One, in your presence. **Sn 566 = Tha 836**

Well taught is the holy life,¹³⁹
(O Sela, said the Blessed One,)¹⁴⁰
seen here and now, nothing to do with time,
where¹⁴¹ the going-forth isn't empty
for one who trains heedfully. **Sn 567 = Tha 837**

The brahmins go forth

24 The brahmin Sela, along with his retinue, received the going forth in the Blessed One's presence; they received the ordination.

¹³⁴ *Brahma*, as in *brahma, cariya*, the "holy life," ie, the Buddha is perfect in terms of the holy life.

¹³⁵ Comys: "those born into families of the outcaste, and so on" (*caṇḍāl'ādini, ca, kule jāto*, DA 3:405 = SnA 455, 17); "one low-born, stuck in the state of falling from darkness into darkness" (*kaṇhābhijātiko 'ti nīca, jātiko tamo tama, parāyana, bhāve thito*, ThaA 3:50); "those dark-skinned by nature" (*kālakaṇḍāliko*, AA 3:394; *kālaka, sabhāvo*, J 5:87); "the dark-skinned, of low birth" (*kaṇhe nīce kule jāto*, NettA:Be 248); cf D 33,1.11(49)/3:233; (**Saṅkhitta**) **Puggala S** (A 4.85/2:85), SD 18.6. Cousins: "All [translators of this Sutta] follow Buddhaghosa here, but the editors of Ps III 405 [MA 3:405] and Pj II 455 [SnA 455] rightly refer to Sv I 162 [DA 1:162]. If such a doctrine of 6 *abhi-jāti* was current and adopted by Sela, then we should translate: 'even one of the lowest kind of behaviour'." See **Cha-ḷ-abhijāti S** (A 6.57) esp §(1) From dark to dark, SD 23.5. Cf Sn 573 below.

¹³⁶ Be Ke Se so; Ee *etañ ce*.

¹³⁷ V1 (Sn) *sammā, sambuddha, sāsane*.

¹³⁸ On the reading *yācanti*, see Tha:N 214 n836 & Warder, *Pali Metre*, 1967 §241.

¹³⁹ Comys say that this phrase means that Sela and the 300 brahmin youths have gone forth by the "Come, bhikshu" (*ehi, bhikkhu*) formula (SnA 456; MA 3:406, also 399). See Intro (4.1).

¹⁴⁰ This line is not part of the verse: see Sn 554a n above.

¹⁴¹ Comy: *Yatthāti yan, nimitā* (ThaA 3:51), "ie the meaning closely approaches that of Pāli *yatra*, "so that," possibly through the development 'wherein' → 'whereby'" (ThaA:N 244 n837). Comy further suggests *yasmim sāsane*, "in the teaching" (ThaA 3:51).

THE KENIYA CYCLE 2

Keniya's alms-offering

25 Then, when the night had passed,¹⁴² the matted-hair ascetic Keniya, having had excellent foods, hard and soft, prepared in his own ashram, [111] announced the time to the Blessed One, “It is time, master Gotama, the meal is ready.”¹⁴³

25.2 Then, early in the morning, the Blessed One, having dressed himself, taking bowl and robe, went to the matted-hair ascetic Keniya's ashram, and sat down on the prepared seats, along with the community of monks.

25.3 Then, the matted-hair ascetic served, with his own hands,¹⁴⁴ and satisfied the community of monks headed by the Buddha, with excellent food, hard and soft.

25.4 Then, when the Blessed One had finished his meal, and washed his bowl and hands,¹⁴⁵ the matted-hair ascetic Keniya, taking a certain low seat, sat down at one side.¹⁴⁶

The thanksgiving¹⁴⁷

25.5 The Blessed One gave thanksgiving with these verses to the matted-hair ascetic Keniya seated at one side, thus:

26 *Aggi.hutta,mukhā¹⁴⁸ yaññā
sāvittī chandaso mukham
rājā mukham manussānam
nadānam sāgaro mukham*

The fire sacrifice is the chief of sacrifices.¹⁴⁹
The Sāvitrī is the chief of poetic metres.¹⁵⁰
The king is the chief amongst humans.
Of rivers, the ocean is the chief. **Sn 568**

*Nakkhattānam mukham cando
ādicco tapataṃ mukham
puññam ākaṅkhamānānam
saṅgho ve yajataṃ mukhan'ti*

Of stars, the moon is the chief,¹⁵¹
the sun is foremost of those that shine.¹⁵²
For those who, desiring merit,
the sangha is indeed the best sacrificer.¹⁵³ **Sn 569**

¹⁴² Ie, early dawn, at first light.

¹⁴³ Note here that Keniya is recorded as still addressing the Buddha as “master Gotama” (*bho gotama*).

¹⁴⁴ This is one of the 5 factors of proper giving, see esp **Velāma S** (A 9.20,3/4:393), SD 16.6.

¹⁴⁵ “Washed his bowl and hands,” *onīta,patta,pāṇiṃ*, which is stock: **D 16/2:88,24, 97,32; M 35/1:236,31, 58/1:-393,30, 81/2:50,20, 85/2:93,10, 92/2:146** (=Sn p111,8), **127/3:145,25; S 35.133/4:122,19, 123,27, 55.26/5:384,19; A 4.57/2:63,3, 5.33/3:37,10, 7.53/4:64,23, 8.12/4:188,10; U 4.3/38,34, 8.6/89,16; Sn 3.7/p111,8**. It is sometimes tr as “(having) withdrawn his hand from the bowl,” esp when preceded by *dhota,hattham*, as in V 1:244: *bhagavantam dhota,hattham onīta,patta,pāṇiṃ*, “the Blessed One washed his hands, and withdrew his hand from the bowl” (V 1:244 §13.2 @ SD 45.7b). But see important long n at Sn:N 281 ad p111 (§25.4). See CPD: *onīta-patta-pāṇi* & DPL: *onīta*.

¹⁴⁶ *Atha kho kenīyo jaṭilo bhagavantam bhuttāvim onīta,patta,pāṇiṃ aññataram nīcam āsanam gahetvā ekam antam nisīdi*.

¹⁴⁷ These thanksgiving verses recur in V 1:246,33* f. Cf Mvst 3:426,7* f.

¹⁴⁸ On *mukha* as “best,” cf Uttarādhyayana,sūtra (Jain), Charpentier 1922:25.16.

¹⁴⁹ The matted-hair ascetics (*jaṭila*) were fire-worshippers, so that the vocabulary here is familiar to them. *Yañña*. “sacrifice” now becomes almsgiving or gift of faith (*deyya,dhamma*) to the monastic community (Nm 523).

¹⁵⁰ Or, “The chief of Vedic metres” (which shows Sela's allusion to his old faith: *sāvitrī*, Rgveda 3.62.10), and the Buddha alludes to this for his benefit as a bridge to the Dharma: see Intro (1.1.3.1) n on *anuṣṭubh*. This is an example of the Buddha's skill in buddhizing non-Buddhist terms, concepts and practices: see Intro (4.2).

¹⁵¹ “Stars,” *nakkhatta*, usu means a constellation or lunar mansion. Here, Comy explains this significance astrologically: “According to the conjunction of the moon, so that from a sign, from its brightness (*āloka,karaṇato*) and from its softness (*somma,bhāvato*), one can say ‘Today is Kattikā, today is Rohinī.’” (The 2 names are lunar months or lunar mansions.) Hence, the moon is said to be the chief of the stars. (SnA 456)

¹⁵² “That shine,” *tapataṃ*, which Comys gloss as “of what are shining (radiant, glowing, etc)” (*tapantānam*, MA 407 = SnA 456)

26.2 Then the Blessed One, having given thanksgiving to the matted-hair ascetic Keṇiya with these verses, rose from his seat and left.¹⁵⁴

THE SELA CYCLE 2

Sela and his retinue become arhats

- 27 Then, dwelling alone, aloof, diligent, exertive, and resolute, the venerable Sela, along with his retinue,¹⁵⁵ [112] by realizing it for themselves¹⁵⁶ through direct knowledge, in no long time at all, in this very life, entered and dwelt in that unsurpassed goal of the holy life for the sake of which sons of family rightly go forth from the household life into homelessness. They¹⁵⁷ directly knew: “Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, done what had to be done, there is no more for this state of being.”¹⁵⁸
- 28 And the venerable Sela, along with his retinue, became arhats amongst others.¹⁵⁹

Sela’s lion-roar

29 Then the venerable Sela, along with his retinue, approached the Blessed One. Arranging their robe to one shoulder, they saluted the Blessed One with joined palms, and then uttered these verses to the Blessed One:

*Yaṃ taṃ saraṇam āgamha¹⁶⁰
ito aṭṭhami cakkhumā
satta rattena¹⁶² bhagavā
dantamhā tava sāsane.*

Since¹⁶¹ we went for refuge,
eight days have passed, O seeing one.
In these seven nights, Blessed One,
we have been tamed in your teaching. **Sn 570 = Tha 838**

*Tuvaṃ buddho tuvaṃ satthā
tuvaṃ mārābhibhū muni
tuvaṃ anusaye chetvā
tiṅṅo tāres’imam pajam.*

You’re the Buddha, you’re the teacher!
You’re the silent sage who conquered Māra.¹⁶³
Cutting off the latent tendencies, you
have guided this generation across. **Sn 571¹⁶⁴ = Tha 839**

Upadhī te samatikkantā

You have gone beyond acquisitions,¹⁶⁵

¹⁵³ Here, the Buddha is recommending “giving” (*dāna*) as the best sacrifice to the fire-worshipper Keṇiya. On this line, see Cousins 1997:276.

¹⁵⁴ *Atha kho bhagavā keṇiyam jaṭilam imāhi gāthāhi anumoditvā utṭhāy’āsanā pakkami.* **Vinaya** account of Keṇiya ends here (Mv 6.35,8) @ SD 45.7b.

¹⁵⁵ Here, *āyasmā selo sa,pariso*, is a sg collective n. Tha:N omits *sa,pariso*. See foll 2 nn.

¹⁵⁶ The Pali is collective sg here, but, following English idiom and consistency, I have tr here and below (see foll n) them as plural. See prec n.

¹⁵⁷ See prec n.

¹⁵⁸ On this para and the next (the attainment of arhathood), see **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9,56.3/1:203) n, SD 7.14.

¹⁵⁹ *Aññataro kho pan’āyasmā selo saporiso arahataṃ ahoṣi.* Note here the collective sg. See nn above on tr.

¹⁶⁰ For technical n, see Tha:N 244 n838.

¹⁶¹ Foll Comy which glosses *yaṃ* as *yasmā*, “since.”

¹⁶² Ee Ce Se so; Be:Ka *anuttarena*. Here *rattī* is idiomatic, meaning “day(s).”

¹⁶³ Comy explains *māra* here as being at least of 5 kinds, ie, (1) the aggregates (*khandha,māra*), (2) defilements (*kilesa,māra*), (3) karma (*abhisāṅkhāra,māra*), (4) death (*maccu,māra*), and (5) the deity (*deva.putta,māra*) (*khandha,kilesābhisāṅkhāra,maccu,deva.putta,mār’ādike*, SnA 455,11). On the significance of Māra, see SD 36.4 (2), See also **Māra**, SD 61.8.

¹⁶⁴ Sn 571 f = Sn 545 f (**Sabhiya S**, Sn 3.6).

<p><i>āsavā te padālītā</i> <i>sīho 'va anupādāno</i> <i>pahīna, bhaya, bheravo</i></p>	<p>you have removed all influxes, like a lion, free from clinging, you have abandoned fear and terror.</p>	<p>Sn 572¹⁶⁶ = Tha 840</p>
<p><i>Bhikkhavo tīsatā ime</i> <i>tiṭṭhanti pañjalī, katā</i> <i>pāde vīra pasārehi</i> <i>nāgā vandantu satthuno 'ti.</i></p>	<p>These 300 monks stand with palms together— extend your feet, O hero, let the nagas¹⁶⁷ salute the teacher!</p>	<p>Sn 573 = Tha 841</p>

— evaṃ —

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¹⁶⁵ “Acquisitions” (*upadhi*), ie, whatsoever that leads to rebirth. Cf *upādi*, “clinging; support, fuel”: see SD 45.18 (2.5.2).

¹⁶⁶ See n on prec verse.

¹⁶⁷ *Nāgā*, usu “bull elephants,” also “serpents,” or colloquially “dragons.” Used of Sāriputta and Moggallāna in last lines of **Anaṅgana S** (M 5/1:32) and **Ratha, vinīta S** (M 24/1:151). Comy ad Tha 703 explains that “*nāga* is a name used for the Buddha” (*nāgo 'ti laddha, nāmo sammā, sambuddho*, ThaA 3:9), and that it is also a name for great serpents, bull elephants, learners, adepts, and pratyeka buddhas (*ahi. nāga, hatthi. nāga, purisa. nāga, sekhāsekha, pacceka. buddha, nāgānam vā*, ThaA 3:10). Here, Sela uses it in the sense of “arhats.” See Tha:N 177 n289.

- M 2.52
Tha 16.1.6
- Majjhima Nikāya 2, Majjhima Paṇṇāsa 5, Brāhmaṇa Vagga 2
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